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In the Nation:

The Larger Stake in Santo Domingo

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By ARTHUR KROCK

WASHINGTON, May 1—When President Johnson interrupted a televised news program Friday night to acknowledge at last that the mission of our military intervention in the Dominican Republic was to forestall a Communist take-over as well as to rescue endangered Americans and other foreigners, he confirmed a fact which for two days the highest Administration spokesmen had curiously refused to concede. And implicit in this combination was the conclusion virtually everyone here had already made. This is, that he is determined there shall be no spread, especially in the Caribbean, of regimes oriented to or controlled either by Moscow or Peking; and that the end has come of the evangelistic and faltering United States policy which assisted Castro to power in Cuba and led to the calamitous episode of the Bay of Pigs.

"Diplomatic Necessity"

Having in effect delegated enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine to the ponderous, divided and uncertain agency of the Organization of American States, the Administration had at first apparently deemed it a diplomatic necessity to insist in the face of clear evidence to the contrary that the only purpose of the United States military landings in the Dominican Republic was to rescue American and other foreigners who were in the line of fire between the Dominican rebels and the armed forces loyal to the government. This line of diplomacy was fortified by the following passage in the President's announcement of his dispatch of the first contingent, the Marines, of the American military rescue expedition:

"The United States Government has been informed by military authorities in the Dominican Republic that American lives are in danger [and that] they are no longer able to guarantee their safety."

But it is historically routine for this Government to respond, by sending

ing troops or other forms of assistance, to Americans whose lives are endangered in the Caribbean area. Why, then, the Congressional leaders, suddenly summoned to the White House to hear the President's announcement, asked of one another, did he cloak the occasion in emergency atmosphere associated with a turning-point in American history?

An obvious explanation was implicit in the summons of the Congressional leaders only a few hours after Mr. Johnson had individually made the decision to land the Marines in the Dominican Republic. Protests from Latin-American nations and certain domestic groups that the United States had returned to "gunboat diplomacy" were certain; and the President wanted to nail down Congressional approval before these protests began. This explanation tightly fits the pattern of his constant search for a "consensus," especially with respect to any foreign policy and steps taken in its pursuit.

But the fact that several of the leaders at the meeting revealed great curiosity as to whether the Dominican rebellion was infiltrated by Communists, and particularly Castro-Communists, indicated their feeling that the obvious purpose was not the entire one. Although Administration aides, including Rear Admiral Rabin, the new C.I.A. director, made small reference to the "Communist angle," the feeling persists that it was much more importantly involved in the President's decision.

Trained in Cuba

An event earlier in the day stimulated this impression among several of the Republicans who were called to the White House. They had attended a "breakfast" of Congressional Republicans whose guest was Jack Hood Vaughan, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Most of his discourse concerned what he described as strong, Castroist-Communist infiltration in Latin

America, most currently conspicuous in the Dominican rebellion. According to members of the group, Vaughan emphasized that this infiltration was advanced by the use of money and by guerrilla fighters trained in Cuba. And when asked whether Moscow or Peking was the most probable source of the financing, he had replied "Moscow."

Also, the day after the dramatic White House meeting, the State Department heightened the impression of a dual objective in the American military landings by one of those familiar official performances in which the right hand points one way and the left hand another. On the highest levels of the department the insistence was maintained that the only purpose was to safeguard the lives of Americans, and of other nationals who desired the protection. On the lower levels a voluntary contribution was made to the press of the names of individuals known to be active in the rebellion, where and by what Communist regime they were trained, etc.

President's Technique

But on the reasonable assumption that the theatrical setting of the President's meeting with the Congressional leaders was designed to give the widest possible publicity to their support of the decision he already had taken and executed, it was an example of the technique the President employs in his constant search for "consensus." By the time the leaders reached the White House they were psychologically conditioned to go along with whatever was the objective. "During my taxi-ride to the White House," said one, "I speculated tensely over what the emergency could be—an attack on Hanoi, perhaps, or even on the Communist China nuclear works. When the President made his anticlimatic announcement that the Government was doing what it has never failed to do, especially in the Caribbean, my relief was so great it took me a while to take a second look for the real message."

"This, I hoped and believe, is that the President intends never to let the Communists set up another government where the U. S. is in shooting range."